



Whatcom County

COUNTY COURTHOUSE
311 Grand Avenue, Ste #105
Bellingham, WA 98225-4038
(360) 778-5010

Agenda Bill Master Report

File Number: AB2026-291

File ID: AB2026-291 **Version:** 1 **Status:** Substitute Adopted
File Created: 04/02/2026 **Entered by:** mrodrigu@co.whatcom.wa.us
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Assigned to: Council Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee **Final Action:** 04/28/2026
Agenda Date: 04/28/2026 **Enactment #:** ORD 2026-023
Related Files:

Primary Contact Email: MRodrigu@co.whatcom.wa.us

TITLE FOR AGENDA ITEM:

Ordinance amending Whatcom County Code Section 5.04.080, Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Oversight Board, and Section 5.04.085, EMS Technical Advisory Board, to change the membership of the EMS Oversight Board and the EMS Technical Advisory Board

SUMMARY STATEMENT OR LEGAL NOTICE LANGUAGE:

See attached

HISTORY OF LEGISLATIVE FILE

Date:	Acting Body:	Action:	Sent To:
04/14/2026	Council	SUBSTITUTE INTRODUCED AS AMENDED	Council Finance and Administrative Services Committee
		Aye: 6 Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, and Scanlon Nay: 1 Stremler	
04/28/2026	Council Criminal Justice and Public Safety Committee	SUBSTITUTE RECOMMENDED FOR ADOPTION WITH PROPOSED AMENDMENT(S)	
		Aye: 7 Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler Nay: 0	

04/28/2026 Council

SUBSTITUTE ADOPTED

Aye: 7 Boyle, Buchanan, Elenbaas, Galloway, Rienstra, Scanlon, and Stremler

Nay: 0

Attachments: Proposed Ordinance, Substitute Ordinance, Revised Substitute Ordinance, Revised Substitute Ordinance as Amended in Committee 4.14.2026, Revised Substitute Ordinance as Amended in Council 4.14.2026, Revised Substitute Ordinance as Amended in Committee 4.28.2026, Notice of Action Proposed on 4.14.2026

PROPOSED BY: GALLOWAY
INTRODUCED: APRIL 14, 2026

ORDINANCE NO. 2026-023

AMENDING WHATCOM COUNTY CODE SECTION 5.04.080 EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS) OVERSIGHT BOARD AND SECTION 5.04.085 EMS TECHNICAL ADVISORY BOARD TO CHANGE THE MEMBERSHIP OF THE EMS OVERSIGHT BOARD AND THE EMS TECHNICAL ADVISORY BOARD

WHEREAS, Whatcom County's Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Oversight Board, along with the EMS Technical Advisory Board, makes recommendations to County government and the County's cities and fire districts regarding the administration, operations, levels of service, budgeting, and financial reporting of the County's EMS system; and

WHEREAS, Whatcom County Code Sections 5.04.080 and 5.04.085 establish the membership and structure of the EMS Oversight Board and the EMS Technical Advisory Board, respectively; and

WHEREAS, the EMS Oversight Board has identified that current code language describing certain membership positions does not fully reflect the intent to ensure broad community representation and diverse perspectives, and the Board recommended updates at its March 11, 2026 meeting; and

WHEREAS, revising the EMS Oversight Board membership language to replace "two EMS or fire department employees or citizens with a demonstrated commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion" with language that includes community members who reflect diverse perspectives and community representation" will better align with the intent and spirit of these roles for both the EMS Oversight Board and its EMS Levy Planning Committee; and

WHEREAS, the EMS Technical Advisory Board has identified that one membership position has historically functioned as an ex officio role rather than a position jointly appointed by the Whatcom County Executive and the Bellingham Mayor, and the Board voted on March 4, 2026 to update the code to reflect current practice; and

WHEREAS, codifying this position as an ex officio member appointed by the Prospect Dispatch Center will more accurately reflect the operational structure of EMS dispatch services within Whatcom County and improve alignment with system partners; and

WHEREAS, these amendments are intended to clarify board membership, align code with current practice, and enhance representation and effectiveness of EMS governance bodies.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT ORDAINED by the Whatcom County Council that Whatcom County Code Sections 5.04.080 and 5.04.085 are hereby amended as indicated in Exhibit A of this ordinance.

ADOPTED this 28th day of April, 2026

ATTEST:

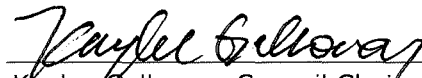

Cathy Halka, Clerk of the Council

APPROVED AS TO FORM:

Kimberly Thulin via email (4/10/26-ks)

Civil Deputy Prosecutor

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON


Kaylee Galloway, Council Chair

WHATCOM COUNTY EXECUTIVE
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON


Satpal Sidhu, County Executive

Approved () Denied

Date Signed: 5/1/26

EXHIBIT A

5.04.080. EMS oversight board.

A. Composition. There is created a joint, advisory, cooperative emergency medical and ambulance services oversight board, consisting of the following 11 members:

1. The Whatcom County executive;
2. The mayor of Bellingham;
3. A mayor of an incorporated city, other than Bellingham, appointed by the Small Cities Partnership;
4. One Bellingham city councilmember, appointed by the Bellingham City Council;
5. One Whatcom County councilmember, appointed by the Whatcom County Council;
6. County Fire District Commissioner, appointed by the County Fire Commissioner's Association;
7. A medical community representative, appointed jointly by the county executive and the mayor of Bellingham;
8. A financial/budget community representative, appointed jointly by the county executive and the mayor of Bellingham;
9. A community member at large, appointed jointly by the county executive and mayor of Bellingham; and
10. Two community members, appointed jointly by the county executive and mayor of Bellingham, who have relevant work, educational, or lived experience including but not limited to EMS/Fire personnel or volunteer, labor representative, service providers, or community members who reflect diverse perspectives and community representation.

B. Duties of the EMS Oversight Board. The EMS oversight board shall:

1. With the active advice and participation of the EMS technical advisory board, make recommendations to Whatcom County and the cities and fire districts of Whatcom County regarding administration, operations, levels of service, and EMS budgets and financial reporting; and
2. Be the primary organization responsible for framing the ongoing vision of an integrated and coordinated EMS system; and
3. Hold at least four meetings per year (quarterly) to review the status of emergency medical services in Whatcom County and to develop recommendations; provided, that all 11 members shall be voting members; and provided further, that a quorum of six members is required in order for the board to take final action. Board recommendations shall be made by a minimum of six members voting to affirm the recommendation; and

4. Consider diversity, equity, and inclusion in all activities and recommendations. Prior to any board action, the board will articulate how that action will achieve diversity, equity, and inclusion goals; and
5. Refer appropriate technical, operational, and medical matters to the EMS technical advisory board; and
6. Ensure that meetings of the EMS oversight board comply with the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 42.30 RCW. At every meeting the board will schedule an open session to take public comment; and
7. The board shall designate a chair and vice chair at the first meeting of each year. The vice chair may serve as interim chair in the absence of the chair; and
8. Staff support of the EMS oversight board shall be designated by and serve under the direction of the county executive; and
9. If an EMS levy is sought to fund EMS services, the EMS oversight board will ensure that the Whatcom County council and the Bellingham city council have an opportunity to review a draft levy service plan and provide feedback prior to the EMS oversight board voting to endorse an EMS levy service plan; and
10. In making recommendations, strive to stay within the adopted county budget and service provider contracts. Any recommendation will include a fiscal analysis and funding recommendation.

C. EMS Levy. If an EMS levy is sought to fund EMS services, Whatcom County council will approve a levy service plan prior to or in conjunction with adoption of an ordinance to place a levy on a ballot for voter approval as per RCW 84.52.069. Additionally, designated staff for the EMS oversight board or a designated representative from the EMS oversight board shall provide to council an annual review of the levy service plan and current and future revenues and expenses of the EMS levy.

1. Levy Service Plan. The EMS oversight board shall review and consider endorsement of a levy service plan in advance of county council approval. Any proposal for a new levy or an extended levy that will require voter approval must be sent to county council at least six weeks prior to any deadline for submitting a proposal to the ballot.
 - a. A levy service plan will be developed with Whatcom County staff support and in coordination with partnering agencies in the county-wide EMS service area.
 - b. The levy service plan will include the following:
 - i. Description of the EMS structure and systems in Whatcom County;
 - ii. Description of the process to develop the levy service plan;
 - iii. Status of previous recommendations;
 - iv. Financial information for EMS revenue, capital expenditures, personnel costs, EMS levy rate calculation, and funding allocations including reserves;

- v. Description of activities and achievements related to diversity, equity and inclusion;
- vi. Strategic recommendations to address diversity, equity, and inclusion in recruitment, hiring, and service to the community as well as other areas;
- vii. Set targets for diversity in staffing and applicants and track progress towards those goals; and
- viii. Track demographics annually of staff in EMS jobs and in the paramedic training programs as well as attendees for recruitment events and applicants for job postings;
- ix. Recommendations, which shall include the following:
 - (A) Medical unit locations,
 - (B) Future service demands,
 - (C) Data and technology systems,
 - (D) Recruitment and training,
 - (E) Prevention and community outreach,
 - (F) Medical dispatch,
 - (G) EMS administration,
 - (H) Diversity, equity, and inclusion, and
 - (I) Target communities and organizations for recruitment

2. Levy Planning Committee.

- a. Membership. The EMS oversight board shall confirm members of an EMS levy committee to guide the development of a levy service plan. Subcommittees may be established to address specific topics in more detail. Members of the EMS levy committee shall include one representative from each of the participating agencies and other members as defined as follows:
 - i. Whatcom County;
 - ii. City of Bellingham;
 - iii. Whatcom County council;
 - iv. Bellingham city council;
 - v. Small Cities representative;
 - vi. Bellingham fire department;
 - vii. Whatcom County Fire District 7;
 - viii. Lynden fire department;
 - ix. Whatcom County Fire Chiefs Association;
 - x. Whatcom County fire commissioners;
 - xi. IAFF Local 106 representative;

- xii. Whatcom 7 firefighters;
 - xiii. Community at large representative;
 - xiv. Community finance representative;
 - xv. EMS/trauma council; and
 - xvi. Two EMS/Fire personnel or community members who reflect diverse perspectives and community representation.
- b. Staff support of the levy planning committee shall be designated by and serve under the direction of the county executive.
- c. The Whatcom County executive and mayor of Bellingham shall appoint a chair from the levy planning committee members.
- d. The levy planning committee shall comply with the Open Public Meetings Act, Chapter 42.30 RCW.

(Prior code § 4.02.080; Ord. 82-109; Ord. 2006-007; Ord. 2013-074 (Exh. A); Ord. 2022-060 Exh. A)

5.04.085 EMS technical advisory board.

A. Composition. There is created a joint, cooperative emergency medical services technical advisory board, consisting of the following 10 members:

1. A member appointed by the Whatcom County Fire Chiefs Association;
2. A member appointed by the county executive from the Whatcom County administration;
3. A hospital/medical community representative, appointed jointly by the county executive and the mayor of Bellingham;
4. A member appointed by Whatcom County Fire District 7 as an ALS service provider;
5. A member appointed by the city of Bellingham fire department as an ALS service provider;
6. A member appointed by the Prospect Dispatch Center;
7. A member appointed by the fire chief of Fire District 7 administration;
8. A member appointed by the Whatcom County EMS/Trauma Care Council;
9. A member appointed by the mayor of Bellingham from the city of Bellingham administration; and
10. The medical program director.

B. Board Officer and Staff Support.

1. County executive and mayor of Bellingham shall jointly appoint chair and vice chair.
2. The chair shall be responsible for convening and conducting meetings.

3. Staff support of the EMS technical advisory board shall be designated by and serve under the direction of the county executive.

4. The EMS technical advisory board may create other interim work groups to assist the EMS technical advisory board in making recommendations. The interim work groups may include other members of the community not part of the EMS technical advisory board.

C. Duties of the EMS Technical Advisory Board. The Technical Advisory Board shall:

1. Serve as advisors and make recommendations to the EMS oversight board and to emergency medical service providers in Whatcom County regarding operational, educational, and logistical components of basic through advanced life support services;

2. Monitor the emergency medical services provided throughout Whatcom County and make recommendations to the EMS oversight board designed to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of those services;

3. Hold meetings as needed with the primary purpose of making such recommendations in an efficient and focused manner;

4. Strive to make recommendations by consensus. In the absence of consensus recommendations may be made by a majority of all members of the EMS technical advisory board;

5. Coordinate ongoing training standards and services;

6. Consider diversity, equity, and inclusion in all activities and recommendations to the EMS oversight board;

7. Review the levy service plan and provide feedback prior to the EMS oversight board considering endorsement of the plan; and

8. Strive to make recommendations that stay within the adopted county budget and service provider contracts. Any recommendations will include a fiscal analysis and funding recommendation.

(Ord. 2013-074 (Exh. A); Ord. 2022-060 Exh. A; Ord. 2024-056 Exh. A)